

Readouts: Minister Alghabra calls with Montana and North Dakota to provide border updates, Feb 17

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Date: Fri, 18 Feb 2022 15:45:00 +0000

Colleagues,

Please find below the summaries of Minister Alghabra's calls with Montana Governor Gianforte and N Dakota Governor Burgum on February 17, undertaken with the objectives of: providing an update on key border points, and the steps being taken by governments and law enforcement; keeping open lines of communication; and recognizing the importance of open borders to our integrated supply chains and our respective economies.

On behalf of the Minister and his office, as well as myself, a big thank you to the Consuls General and their teams at the Denver and Minneapolis consulates and WSHDC/Kazlauskas for their prompt actions to facilitate these calls on an urgent basis.

Frank

Summary of Minister's Alghabra call with Montana Governor Gianforte, Feb 17, 11:15am

The Minister thanked the Governor for taking time to discuss the border situation, noting that the Coutts port of entry is very important to both of our economies. With \$15bn worth of trade crossing through Coutts every year, its closure has caused uncertainty and significant disruption to business and persons who rely on access to that POE. With Coutts now open to traffic, the Minister added that the Government will do what we can to ensure that it, and other ports of entry, remain open.

s.38

Minister Alghabra stated that those mandates were intended to be temporary and time limited. He highlighted the challenge of providing a specific date due to the virus' unpredictable nature but assured the Governor that the GoC will rescind the mandates when our public health experts indicate they are no longer necessary.

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Minister Alhabra acknowledged the Governor's opinions and noted space for legitimate public policy debate. He proceeded to explain Canada's different approach and how he had just announced a relaxation of certain travel restrictions. The Minister also took pains to indicate that the data and empirical evidence we're seeing prove that the mandate has not materially impacted the supply chain, but clearly that the blockades have.

The Minister and Governor both acknowledged the right of persons to assemble and protest/make their voices heard but they shouldn't have the right to illegally block trade that has such a big impact on both countries. The Minister took the opportunity to express his gratitude for Montana offering free vaccinations to Canadian truckers last year at a time when Canada was having trouble procuring enough doses.

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The Minister clarified that many mandates are governed by the provinces. The GoC has jurisdiction at the border, where we've just eased some measures for travel, and we look forward to eliminating all mandates when the time is right.

They closed by expressing a mutual interest in keeping an open dialogue and collaborating on other bilateral issues.

Participants:

- Governor's office: Governor Gianforte, Glenn Oppel (Policy Director)
- Canada:
 - Minister Alhabra
 - Mike Maka, Chief of Staff, Minister's Office
 - Miled Hill, Director of Policy, Minister's Office
 - Sylvain Fabi, Consul General, Denver
 - Frank Stendardo (Transport Counsellor - Canadian Embassy)

Drafted: WSHDC/Stendardo, Consulted: TC/Hill

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Summary of Minister's Alhabra call with N Dakota Governor Burgum, Feb 17, 12:30pm

The Minister began by thanking N Dakota Governor Burgum for helping with vaccinating truckers early on in the pandemic. He also congratulated the Governor on his State of the State address given the previous day.

Recognizing the strong bilateral relationship, the Minister explained his objective was to reach out and provide an update on the Emerson border port of entry. Minister Alhabra noted that the illegal blockade had ended yesterday and the Emerson POE – where \$23bn in trade per year normally crosses -- has re-opened to traffic.

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The Minister stated that law enforcement should be congratulated in ending this blockade peacefully and, to ensure it doesn't re-occur, the GoC has provided the police more tools to deter future blockades. He re-iterated the right to protest against public policy, while noting that we draw the line at illegally blocking borders and effecting significant economic impact. Minister Alghabra said that it is important that we remain vigilant as well as continue to share information between our respective law enforcement agencies.

Both sides indicated that they had no significant new intelligence to share regarding other blockades being planned.

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The conversation closed with acknowledgement of the good collaboration and a commitment to nurture the relationship our two countries have.

Participants:

- Governor's office:
 - o Governor Burgum
 - o Jace Beehler – Chief of Staff
 - o Tammy Miller – Governor's Chief Operating Officer
 - o Bill Panos – ND Director of DOT
 - o Colonel Brandon Solberg – ND Highway Patrol
- Canada:
 - o Minister Alghabra
 - o Mike Maka, Chief of Staff, Minister's Office
 - o Miled Hill, Director of Policy, Minister's Office
 - o Ariel Delouya, Consul General, Minneapolis
 - o Frank Stendardo (Transport Counsellor - Canadian Embassy)

Drafted: WSHDC/Stendardo, Consulted: TC/Hill

From: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>

Sent: February 16, 2022 2:50 PM

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Subject: RE: URGENT - TC Minister Alghabra seeking calls with ND Gov. Burgum and MO Gov. Gianforte

Hi Frank, Thanks for this. I just spoke with the Ambassador briefly to give her an update. She's ok with these calls going ahead as a way to underscore federal govt involvement to lift/prevent the blockades. She's prepared to speak with the Minister beforehand if he wishes, inter alia, to ensure he's aware of where these governors are coming from on the vax issue and the possibility they would press him on Canada's plans for the trucker vax requirement.

Martin

From: Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>

Sent: February 16, 2022 12:06 PM

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Subject: RE: URGENT - TC Minister Alghabra seeking calls with ND Gov. Burgum and MO Gov. Gianforte

Importance: High

Martin, Ariel, Sylvain, Kirsten:

Transport Canada (DM and MinO) confirmed this morning that they would like Minister Alghabra to speak with the Governors of N Dakota and Montana, hopefully tomorrow (Thursday). I don't believe we would need more than 15 minutes each.

Martin – do you think there is benefit to the Ambassador speaking with the Minister beforehand?

I have indicated to TC MinO that Ariel and Sylvain should participate on the calls given their existing relationships with governors and responsibilities for these regions. I would also be grateful for DENVR and MNPLS help in setting up these calls (and coordinating so we don't book the same time for both governors).

The Minister's EA has provided us with the following available time slots:

- Thursday, Feb 17 – 10:30-11:00, 11:15-11:45, 12:30-1:00 (EST)

I would expect an agenda along the following lines, though it could change depending on border developments:

- update on Coutts and Emerson border ports of entry, respectively;
- explaining authorities under Emergencies Act;
- next steps

I would also expect the Minister to thank Governors for their help in getting Canadian truckers vaccinated last year when Canada was having trouble procuring doses. And to be prepared to respond to comments/requests to rescind the trucker vaccination mandate.

WSHDC Comms also noted the importance of checking with the governors' comms teams regarding what, if anything, they plan to say on social media.

Please let me know if I've forgotten to take anything into account or any other key messages to suggest to the Minister.

Thank you in advance for your expert help.

Frank

P.S. Please find below a readout of the Minister's introductory call with Amb Cohen yesterday focus on border closures, supply chains, climate/EVs, ICAO accident investigation framework.

**FLASH REPORT: Meeting between Minister Alghabra and U.S. Ambassador Cohen
(Videoconference)
February 15, 2022 – 4PM**

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In turn, the Minister agreed that both countries worked collaboratively over the past days and referred to his exchanges with Secretary Buttigieg. He shared his satisfaction of seeing the Ambassador Bridge reopen, and noted that progress is being made at other crossings. He clarified that the Coutts crossing was cleared last night and reopened at 1PM today. As for Emerson, based on his latest update, there was optimism despite the crossing not yet being opened. s.38

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The Minister noted his ongoing engagement efforts at the regional and sectoral level and the naming of key individuals to a task force, who will make recommendations, based on their expertise, to the government by the Spring/Summer. He also alluded to his federal budget request for additional support for supply chain resiliency, addressing trucker shortages and governance changes to our ports and rail network. He also pointed to the commitment he made with Secretary Buttigieg in Glasgow to stay connected on Supply Chain matters. s.38

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They agreed to continue to exchange views on the topic.

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They agreed to stay in touch and build on the newly formed rapport.

The call ended at 4:48pm.

(Prepared by Brigitte Joly, DG International, TC)

From: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>
Sent: February 15, 2022 10:45 AM
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Cc: McLeod, Colin -MNPLS -GR <Colin.McLeod@international.gc.ca>; Wessman, Joel -MNPLS -GR <Joel.Wessman@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Fabi, Sylvain -DENVR -HOM/CDM <Sylvain.Fabi@international.gc.ca>; Layton, John -WSHDC -TD <John.Layton@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>
Subject: RE: URGENT - Minister Alghabra call with ND Gov. Burgum

I'm available on 202 717 5616.

Ariel will no doubt have views but for my part, unless there's an existing relationship, I'm skeptical of the value of ministerial calls to governors on this matter unless it's to present a compelling list of steps the government is taking so as to reassure the governors the blockades will be lifted rapidly, or to make a specific ask for something we can't do and they likely would be inclined to help with. As you note, they may well criticize the mandates.

Martin

From: Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>
Sent: February 15, 2022 10:35 AM
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Subject: RE: URGENT - Minister Alghabra call with ND Gov. Burgum

Martin, Ariel, do you have a minute to discuss right now?
I'm having a back and forth with TC MinO and DM on how to approach this issue.

While the original intent was to prep the scene in case we needed tow help at Emerson, that is no longer needed with the Emerg Act.

However, TC is thinking about the benefits of keeping the momentum going. Minister speaking to the US ambassador today, maybe governors tomorrow and Thursday. That way it keeps the urgency going that we care about this etc. Not just that our announcement was a big flashy move.

Only worry is putting him in front of governors who will complain about the vax mandates and are preparing to send a letter to PM and POTUS seeking to remove the trucker vax mandate.

Does MNPLS or WSHDC think the risk outweighs the benefits?

From: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>
Sent: February 15, 2022 10:02 AM
To: Delouya, Ariel -MNPLS -HOM/CDM <Ariel.Delouya@international.gc.ca>; Kazlauskas, Kirsten -WSHDC -WS <Kirsten.Kazlauskas@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>
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Subject: RE: URGENT - Minister Alghabra call with ND Gov. Burgum

Frank – Do you have any insight on what Min Alghabra's "ask" might be? According to PM presser yesterday the EA gives Cda authority to compel co-operation from tow truck companies in Canada, which presumably takes that piece off the table, or at least reduces importance.
Ariel may have insights as to what kind of assistance Burgum may be inclined to offer.
Martin

From: Delouya, Ariel -MNPLS -HOM/CDM <Ariel.Delouya@international.gc.ca>
Sent: February 15, 2022 9:55 AM
To: Kazlauskas, Kirsten -WSHDC -WS <Kirsten.Kazlauskas@international.gc.ca>
Cc: McLeod, Colin -MNPLS -GR <Colin.McLeod@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; Wessman, Joel -MNPLS -GR <Joel.Wessman@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Fabi, Sylvain -DENVR -HOM/CDM <Sylvain.Fabi@international.gc.ca>; Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; Layton, John -WSHDC -TD <John.Layton@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>
Subject: Re: URGENT - Minister Alghabra call with ND Gov. Burgum

Kirsten,

This will be of interest to WSHDC and TC.

<https://www.kvrr.com/2022/02/15/burgum-wants-international-border-blockade-to-end/>

AD

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 14, 2022, at 22:18, Kazlauskas, Kirsten -WSHDC -WS
<Kirsten.Kazlauskas@international.gc.ca> wrote:

Many thanks for the update. I've flagged this to Frank for his follow up at TC. We'll keep you posted and will let you know asap if this works for the minister's schedule tomorrow.

Kirsten

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 14, 2022, at 9:16 PM, Delouya, Ariel -MNPLS -HOM/CDM
<Ariel.Delouya@international.gc.ca> wrote:

Kirsten,

I heard back from Governor Burgum's office. They are proposing a time of 11:00 EST tomorrow (10:00 CST). It's not much notice but his office is appreciative that we're reaching out.

AD

From: Kazlauskas, Kirsten -WSHDC -WS <Kirsten.Kazlauskas@international.gc.ca>
Sent: February 13, 2022 10:15 AM
To: Delouya, Ariel -MNPLS -HOM/CDM <Ariel.Delouya@international.gc.ca>
Cc: McLeod, Colin -MNPLS -GR <Colin.McLeod@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; Wessman, Joel -MNPLS -GR <Joel.Wessman@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Fabi, Sylvain -DENVR -HOM/CDM <Sylvain.Fabi@international.gc.ca>; Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; Layton, John -WSHDC -TD <John.Layton@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>
Subject: RE: Urgent - Minister Alhabra call with ND Gov. Burgum

Ariel,

Thanks for the quick action. I just spoke with Frank for a bit more clarification. I understand that Coutts, AB is the problem now, but there is concern that a situation at Emerson, MB could soon develop. So yes, Frank relayed to me that there is indeed interest in connecting

with both Governors Gianforte and Burgum. We very much appreciate your assistance in teeing up a call with North Dakota.

Separately, I just spoke with Andy Janes in DENVR who is doing the same for Montana.

Thanks,
Kirsten

From: Delouya, Ariel -MNPLS -HOM/CDM <Ariel.Delouya@international.gc.ca>
Sent: February 13, 2022 11:05 AM
To: Kazlauskas, Kirsten -WSHDC -WS <Kirsten.Kazlauskas@international.gc.ca>
Cc: McLeod, Colin -MNPLS -GR <Colin.McLeod@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; Wessman, Joel -MNPLS -GR <Joel.Wessman@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Fabi, Sylvain -DENVR -HOM/CDM <Sylvain.Fabi@international.gc.ca>
Subject: Re: Urgent - Minister Alghabra call with ND Gov. Burgum

Hi Kirsten,

To add to Colin's message, if Minister Alghabra wants to discuss the Coutts, AB/Sweetgrass, MT crossing situation, Sylvain Fabi and the DENVR team will be better placed to help since MT falls within their territory.

However, there would be obvious value in connecting with Governor Burgum to discuss disruptions at Emerson, MB/Pembina ND, the second busiest trade corridor between Canada and the YS west of the Great Lakes, facilitated by I-29, that connects Western Canada to Kansas City, and which runs through such key ND cities as Grand Forks and Fargo. It is an important artery for agricultural trade in particular. Given the disruptions there as a result of the actions of Canadian truckers, I would expect that this will be on the mind of the Burgum Administration.

Would you like us to reach out to Governor Burgum's office to tee up a potential call? MNPLS has a close relationship with the Governor's office.

AD

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 13, 2022, at 09:06, Kazlauskas, Kirsten -WSHDC -WS <Kirsten.Kazlauskas@international.gc.ca> wrote:

Good morning,

TC Minister Alghabra is seeking help – on an urgent basis – **to arrange a call with North Dakota Governor Burgum** to discuss the border situation at Coutts, AB and to seek assistance.

Note that I have also reached out to CG Fabi in Denver regarding a parallel request for MT Gov. Gianforte.

I have looped in Frank Stendardo, WSHDC's transport counsellor, who is the primary point of contact for the request and is currently liaising with TC for available scheduling windows and other details. Grateful for your immediate assistance in helping Frank set up this call for the minister. If I can provide additional support, please don't hesitate to give me a call at 202-391-2450.

Best,
Kirsten

Kirsten Kazlauskas

Intergovernmental Affairs | Embassy of Canada, Washington, D.C.

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